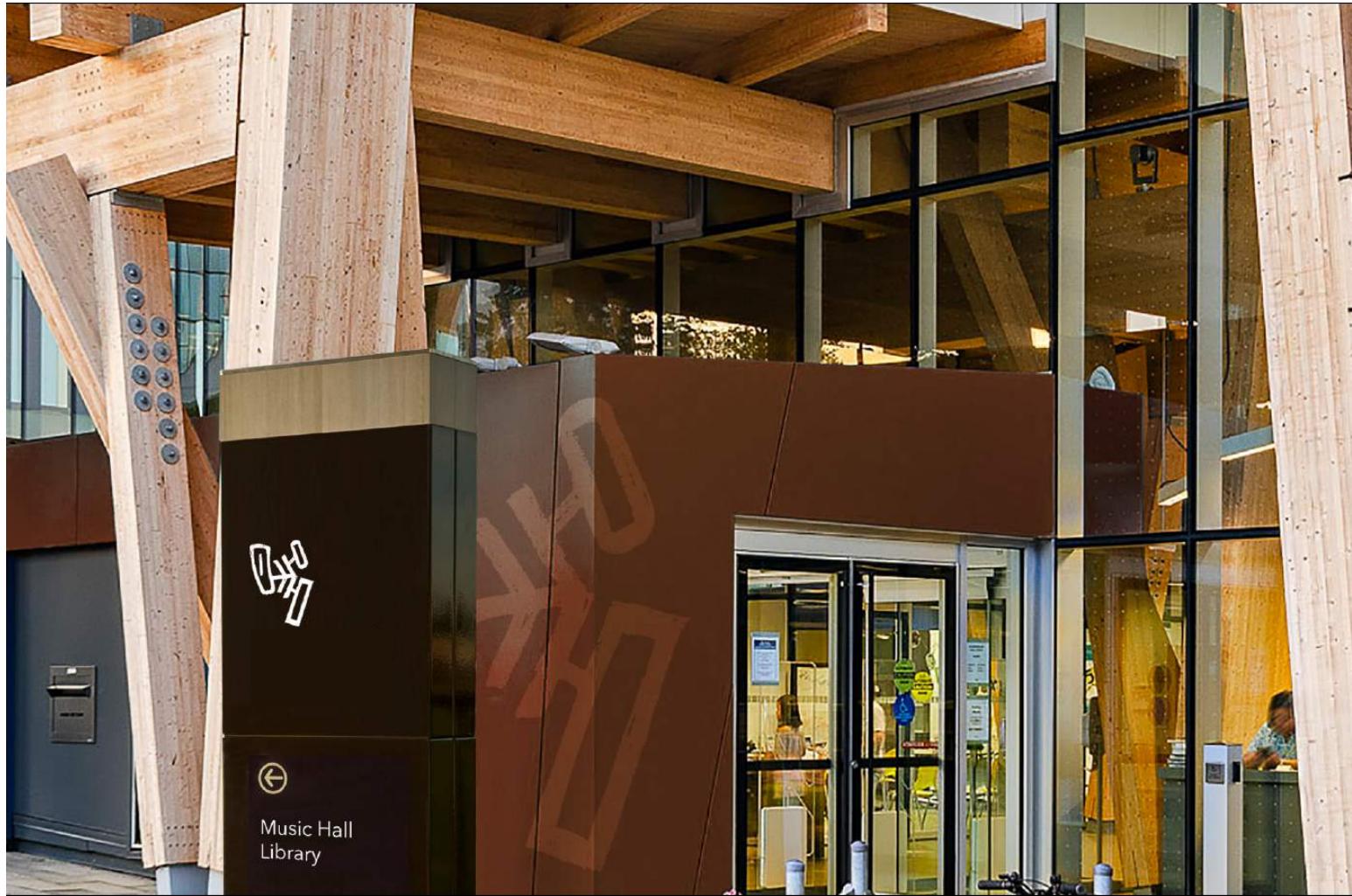




Creativity, Culture and Community Centre

Project Group Outline Proposal
informed by Precinct Masterplan 2009



Concept image

Purpose of this Document

This document is an outline of the 2016 Community initiative which has investigated the possibilities for redevelopment of the community centre and library precinct in Woodend. The project originated with work done on behalf of Macedon Ranges Shire Council by Morton Dunn Architects in 2009, to develop a Master Plan for a "Macedon Ranges Culture and Arts Precinct" on the community centre/ library/ squash courts site.



Project Background

In 2007, MRSC commissioned a Master Plan and Facility Concept Plan for the development of a Macedon Ranges Community and Arts Precinct that would provide a new focus for the Region and a “Community Heart” in Woodend. This planning process was described in the 2009 Morton Dunn Report, attached as Appendix 1.

In 2015, with the Morton Dunn Report Master Plan not yet implemented, and noting the continued deterioration of disused buildings on the site, a group of Macedon Ranges residents established the Community Centre Project. The Group has undertaken a review of the 2009 Report, and has completed further Community Consultation, Concept Planning, and promotion of the project, working towards the vision for a new, integrated Macedon Ranges Community and Arts Precinct located in Woodend.

By working in partnership with local Council, and with our Members at State and Federal Government level, we hope to fund a cohesive plan in two stages. We aim to involve local businesses and trades in the overall build of the project, and to bring in key stakeholders to assist in the design of the various components: i.e.: young people in the design of the skate park, seniors in the footpath planning.

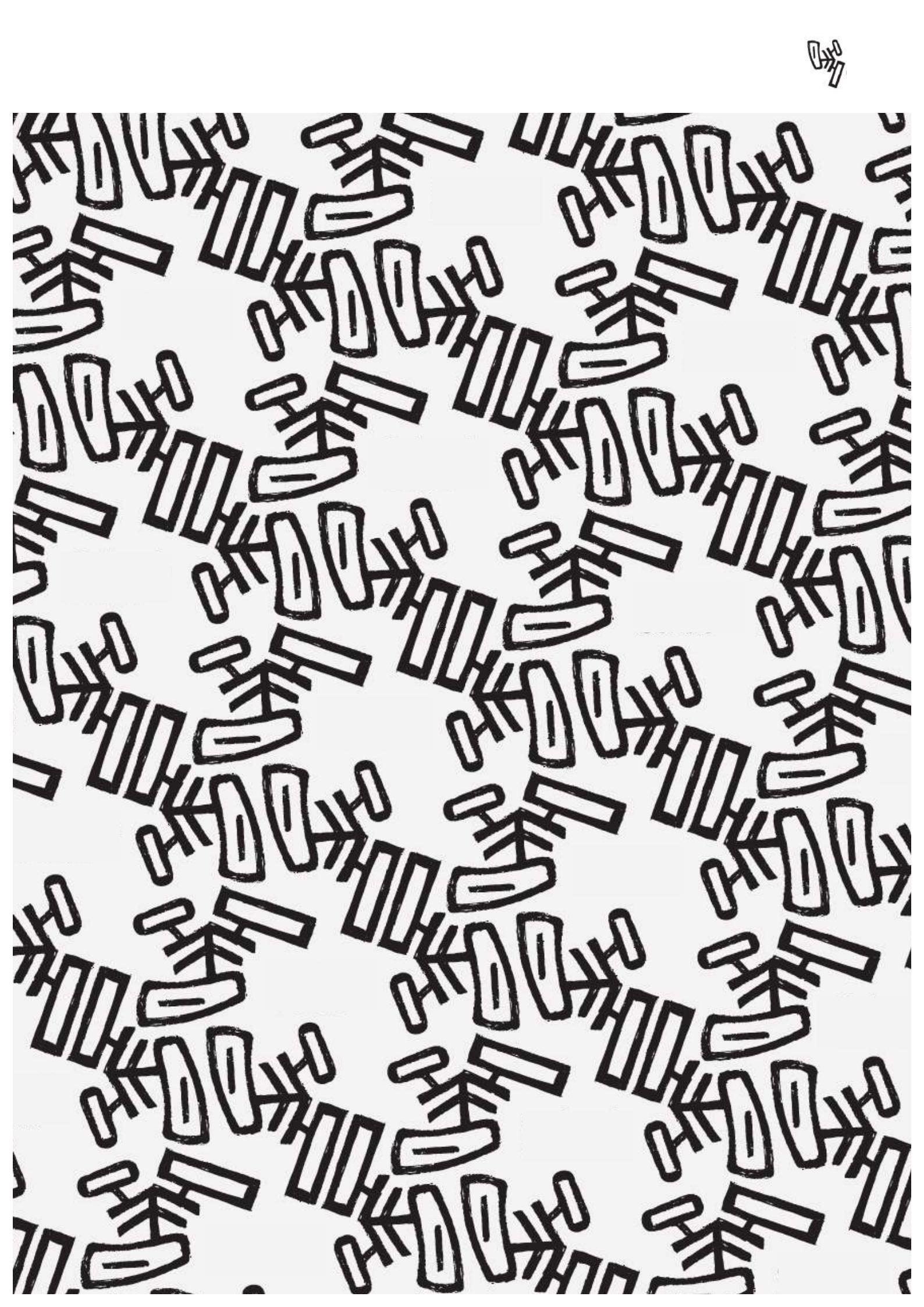
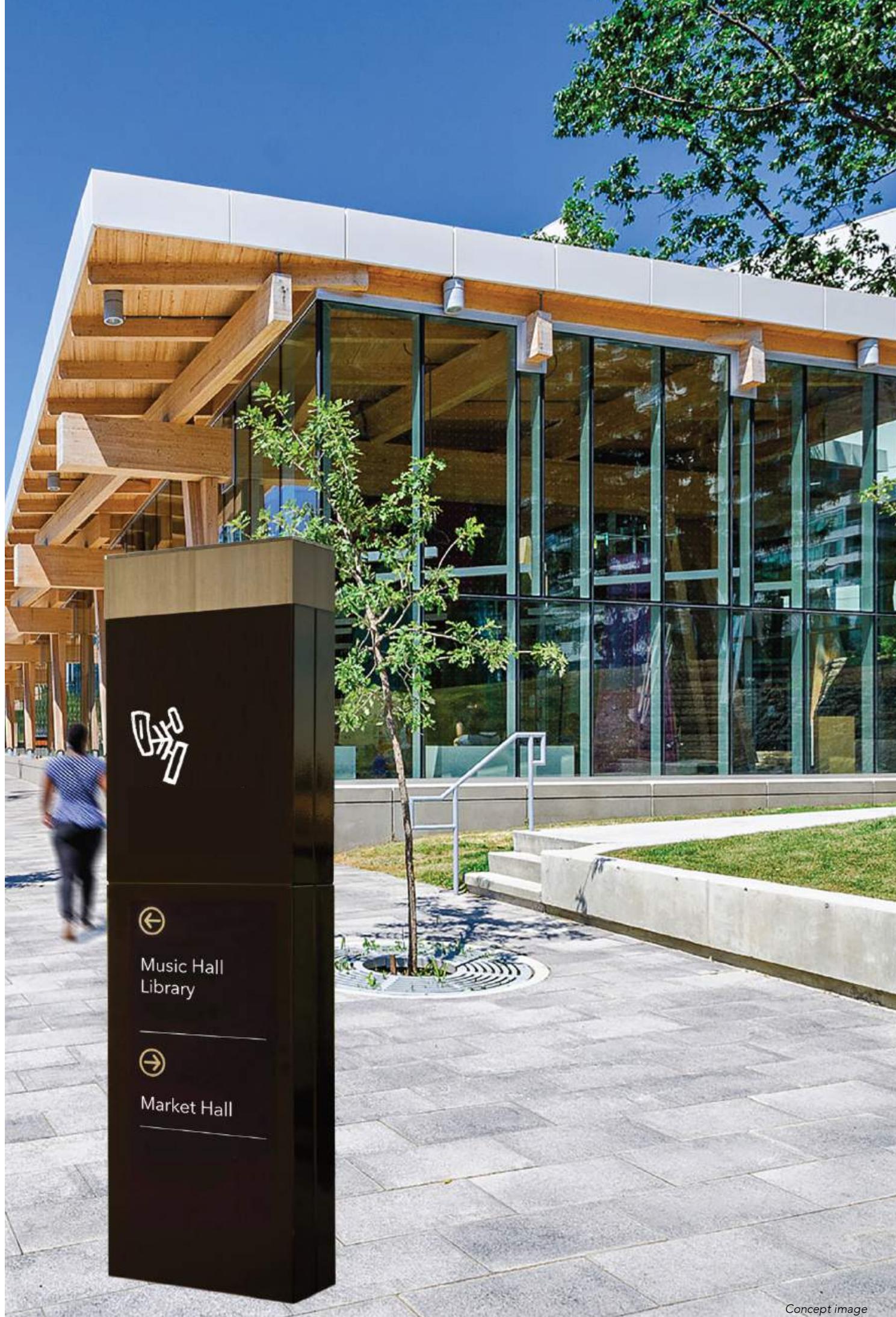




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Concept image



Cultural Centre in Woodend – the need and the opportunity

A revitalised cultural centre is a concept that has potential to contribute to strengthening the Macedon Shire Region as a leading community and cultural showcase.

Identified Needs:

The Woodend Winter Arts Festival is a major annual event with Regional and State significance, but no adequate performance space. Local schools and groups such as the film society similarly have no facility for concerts or presentations.

The existing library building, refurbished after Ash Wednesday to serve as a meeting place for the town, no longer adequately meets the needs of the community and Shire, is outdated, and we understand has ongoing expensive maintenance issues. The building wants physical and functional overhaul.

The squash court and sauna building is disused and in a state of obvious disrepair, even though it occupies a prominent position in the town's main public space precinct.

The Woodend Farmers Market and Lions Club Market use land along the footpath beside the squash court, and part of the carpark near the pool. Inclement weather can disrupt markets at any time of year in the Macedon Ranges, and an undercover market hall has strong support.

Parking and drainage in the precinct is below standard for pedestrian and cycle access, and is inefficient for cars and other vehicles including trucks and vans supplying markets, tourists with caravans or trailers, and busses supporting events at Hanging Rock. There are various pavement and drainage issues, and safety concerns associated with swimming pool and tennis club parking.

Opportunities:

Based on the 2016 community consultation and discussions within the Project Group, and in concert with the existing master plan, the following opportunities are identified:

- The visitor information centre is underutilised and could assume a more prominent Regional function at the Forest St turnoff to Daylesford.
- The precinct currently has the Macedon Ranges Shire customer service centre for Woodend; other community uses (eg markets, meeting rooms); learning functions (library); and contributes to Woodend's sporting and youth facilities with the adjacent skate park, swimming pool, and tennis club. Upgrading the land area to a purpose designed cultural and arts precinct is a natural progression to the ways the area is already utilised.
- Current land use zoning and Planning guidelines support the land use envisioned by the Project Group.
- Approximately 400 Woodend residents are professional artists (2006 Census). The Winter Arts Festival is a significant Regional event with the potential to grow into the future. The strong artistic culture in our town will further develop and prosper when supported by well-designed indoor and outdoor arts spaces.



Project Concept

Combining the needs and unique opportunities that the site presents could see a revitalisation of the precinct result in much more than the sum of its parts. This Cultural Centre is expected to serve the community, attract visitors, nurture the economy, and feature as one of the Macedon Ranges' top public spaces.

Discussions with community groups and the recently updated **community survey** (attached as Appendix 2) has confirmed strong interest in learning, cultural and arts, and community use spaces for all ages, based on flexible in and outdoor facilities, likely to include:

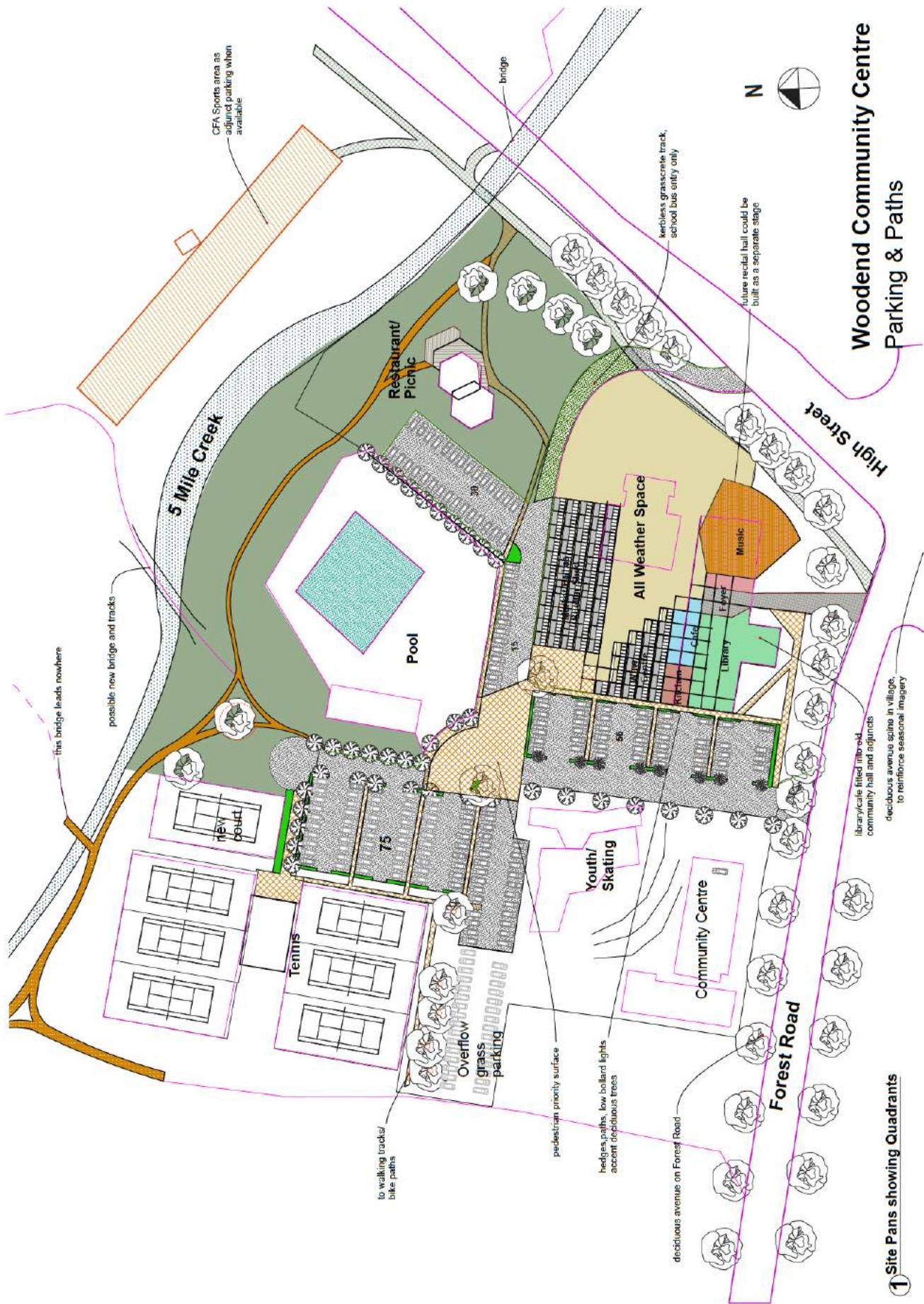
- An upgraded visitor centre and tourism promotion hub;
- the library as a contemporary information and learning centre;
- provision of a multi-use auditorium and performance space;
- new spaces for meetings and small gatherings; and,
- weather protection for the popular markets.

Our project's interest extends to include the surrounding public land, with an emphasis on better connections to and within the precinct, as initially identified in the Morton Dunn Master Plan.

The project concept is to work in full partnership with MRSC, and with the support of State and Federal members of parliament, and other relevant organisations such as tourist promotion and economic development agencies. We hope to approach the project in two main stages. Details of the two-stage proposal are being developed, and will be adaptable to differing funding scenarios.

Much of the feasibility and early concept planning of the site was done by the Morton Dunn investigation some seven years ago. We see the master plan as the base for an evolving project that our group will take forward, informed by further conversations and consultation with our community, Macedon Ranges Shire Council, and the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments.

A site plan with an initial concept is included to demonstrate the depth of thought which the Committee has dedicated to the Project thus far. It is noted that the complete requirements definition has not finished, and that we are expecting further inputs before a Design Brief might be settled.





Concept image

Way forward

The Community Centre Project Group is planning to become incorporated, and is organising into task groups where members with skillsets will work to take the project forward. These skill areas include community and government engagement, public information, fundraising, design, and project coordination. The 2009 Master Plan report identified 15 'key recommendations'. Most of these are considered valid by our Group, reflecting the generally accepted aims for the site, and basics of our proposal which include:

- Demolition of disused/unsightly buildings, potential refurbishment of others on the site;
- Provision of integrated traffic and pedestrian pathways.
- Construction of weather protected market space;
- Construction of performing arts space; and
- Upgrade/ construction of a tourism information hub.

These objectives are supported by the summary of community survey inputs attached at Appendix 2. By coordinating this support and working where we can to promote the project with all levels of Government and to all avenues of funding, we aim to realize the vision for the site, and provide Woodend and the Macedon Ranges Shire with a significant landmark public space.

Appendices:

1. Moreton Dunn Report, 2009
2. Community survey summary 2016
3. Project Group membership



Who are We?

We are a group of not-for-profit volunteers and residents who are collectively passionate and professional in town planning, architecture, youth services, the arts, and teaching.

We are focussed on the creation of quality facilities, infrastructure and services. As a group, and as a town, we have a great track record of pulling the town together and driving community based initiatives across the line. These include the reopening of Braemar College from Clyde in the 1970's, the Woodend Visitor Information Centre, Newell Reserve, The Woodend Children's Park, High Street Streetscape, The Heritage Society and Walk, the revitalised Woodend Netball and Tennis Club.

The Community Centre Community Group includes alphabetically:

Joanna Casey

Work with the Shire through education and community involvement. She hopes to bring an older residents historical perspective to what she views as an exciting project.



Fergus Chisholm

Infrastructure & procurement for major education sector institution. Committee member and Club Secretary Woodend Tennis Club, involved in 2nd Woodend Scouts.

Don Drummond

Committee member & co-convenor Books & Ideas events the Woodend Winter Arts Festival. Member of Macedon Ranges Shire Council's Positive Aging Advisory Committee. An Educational Publisher prior to retirement.



Sheila Drummond

Literary Agent . Committee & co-convenor Books & Ideas events Woodend Winter Arts Festival. Founder, committee member Friends of Macedon Ranges Libraries.

David Fagetter

Architect (retired). Interested in sustainable design and brings experience in having worked with communities in Melbourne, London and Singapore. A particular interest in low impact design and designs enabling growth and change for communities.



Esther Kay

Independent planner.

Previously part of the Shire Community Reference Group for the 2014 Woodend Town Structure Plan and Neighbourhood Character Study. Involved in the 1999 and 2000 pre-Calder Freeway bypass initiatives. Member of Landcare and the Woodend and District Heritage Society.



Barry McDonald

President of Woodend Lions Club
Foundation member of Settle Woodend and retiring teacher.



Adam Nitschke

Landscape Architect
Master planning & strategy for Parks Victoria.

Matt Sanderson

Engineering & project management for private sector consulting engineers, with experience locally and internationally in Afghanistan and East Timor with complex civil engineering projects.



Fiona Slechten

Planner in both local government and the private sector. Past experience includes being a Town Planner with the Grampians & Macedon Ranges Shires.

Jane Walduck

Community organiser
Founding member of Woodend Children's Park and Woodend Community Children's Garden. Parent Support Committee Chair 2nd Woodend Scouts.



Brad Welsh

Woodend business owner of Buro of Ideas, graphic design & brand strategy practice. Brad devised all branding for Woodend Children's Park, Woodend Tennis Club, Woodend Primary School and Woodend Spokes of Hope.

Colin Yeung

Business operations for an architectural engineering practice. Previously founding & committee member MITCH – Music in the Central Highlands.





Group Objectives

As a group, we will:

- Continue the community consultation achieved by Morton & Dunn in 2008/9, and identify the needs of the community, and that of the broader community in relation to the civic centre facilities to increase the commitment to utilise this precinct.
- Design and assist in the construction of a community civic centre that reflects the identified needs and integrates the important local environmental heritage and suitable and accessible infrastructure that can be used for a wide range of business and community groups.
- Help raise the capital required to finance the project through fundraising, sponsorship, grants and partnerships.
- In conjunction with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council arrange for the construction and subsequent maintenance of the Centre.





***A centre to strengthen the
shire and community***



APPENDIX

A1 Existing Conditions

The Site currently consists of the following structures and features:

- Community Centre
- Library
- Customer Service Centre
- Meeting Rooms
- Hall
- Squash Courts (now archives)
(demolition recommended)
- Visitor Information Centre
- Swimming Pool and Facilities
- Rotundas
- Tennis Courts
- Skate Park
- Community Hub Building
- Sustainable Garden/Sculpture Garden
- Neighbourhood House
- Five Mile Creek (incl Woodend Bridge)
- High Street (former highway)
- Car parking
- Roadways
- Recreation spaces
- River Walk & Landscape Elements
- Walking and Cycling Paths





A2 Community Consultation

Morton & Dunn carried out a community survey in March 2008 with 100 respondents from Woodend. People were interviewed about how they use community facilities in the precinct and their vision for a future Community Arts facility. The 2016 community survey provides multiple choice responses similar to those in the 2009 survey with the additional option to write in responses. Available online and in printed form, the 2016 survey has received 430 responses since August 2016. Both surveys place the Woodend Community Centre within the context of the civic spine along Five Mile Creek with its public open space, recreational and community facilities. The questions assume that the Community Centre will continue to be a Council and community facility and at minimum support the current functions of the library, gathering spaces, Council service centre and outdoor markets, with room to grow and change through this project initiative.

The 2016 survey acknowledges changes since 2009 including the growth of the Woodend Winter Arts Festival, development of the Woodend Childrens Park on the opposite side of High Street, construction of additional walking trails along Five Mile Creek, the Rotary exercise track at Buffalo Stadium and establishment of the popular monthly Farmers Market in addition to the long standing monthly Lions Club market. The recently prepared town plan for Woodend (Woodend Town Structure Plan 2014) identifies Woodend as a village that will support modest growth within its rural setting, partially in response to the need to maintain the town's role for tourism, a role that can contribute to the success of a redeveloped facility. Against this backdrop there has been a digital transformation in how people access and use information, and the NBN has arrived in Woodend as well as in other parts of the Shire.

The 2016 survey results tell us that overall people would like to retain the current functions of the library and community centre but they support the upgrading of facilities and are open to expanding the uses at this site which could include some level of commercial activity. A summary of the survey responses follows:

- There is good representation across family and single households, especially couples with children in the 35-49 year age group and those in the older age groups. We assume from the emphasis on youth in the survey results that the needs of the younger members of households (or even of grandchildren) were considered in filling out the survey.
- Respondents appear to be drawn primarily from the Calder corridor. Nine out of ten respondents use community facilities in Woodend, with about half of respondents also using facilities in Gisborne and Kyneton, indicating that people will travel to other towns to satisfy their needs.
- Respondents use an average of five to six community facilities in Woodend. The majority use the library and Farmers Market. The nearby recreational facilities in the precinct also have reasonable usage.



- When asked about their most frequently used community facility, respondents indicate a high frequency of use, with at least seven in 10 respondents using it two or more times a month. More than one in two respondents use their most used facility at least weekly.
- Respondents attend an average of three events per year across the Shire. In the past year the majority of respondents participated in a monthly outdoor market. One in two respondents participated in the yearly Woodend Winter Arts Festival. A variety of other venues, activities and locations were also frequented.
- 'Quality/appearance of the facility' is the most important factor in a community meeting or performance space - people care about how it looks (seven in 10 respondents). This includes the change/toilet facilities which received high marks. Functional elements such as acoustics and the size of rooms are also important for one in two respondents. Other support facilities associated with a community space like car parking and cafés are also of importance for at least one in two.
- 'Variety of performance/multi-purpose' top the response to the most important priority for the site for the next five to 10 years (seven in 10 respondents). Involvement of the community, extension of the library and the market hall also key considerations for one in two respondents.
- There are consistent views about what a community centre/precinct should be. The following individual responses are indicative:

"An ideal community centre precinct would be aesthetically pleasing, functional, and cater to the whole community: library, small group spaces, large performance spaces, outdoor market and picnic areas, and paths that link to the Woodend Children's Park and the rest of the shopping precinct. It would be great if this precinct could run off the grid and incorporate passive solar design principles too."

"A venue and space that caters to many levels of needs and interests and for a range of ages. Somewhere welcoming, accessible and affordable and that welcomes community suggestions and the involvement and nurturing of local talent and expertise. A place where NO ONE feels excluded, marginalised or patronised. An attractive, well designed, stimulating venue."

"A social place that can be used by families while spending hours in town getting children to and from various sports and activities, a social meeting place with some basic comfort facilities (seating/coffee/tea making or a small cafe facility/ change rooms/kitchenette)."
- Tourism is recognised by some respondents as important to the economy and local businesses. While most respondents are generally supportive of tourism, the following individual responses indicate the range of community attitudes:

"Tourism is important to the whole Macedon Ranges bringing in income to all the towns."

"I think the focus should be towards the existing community - if the community is vibrant then tourists will come."

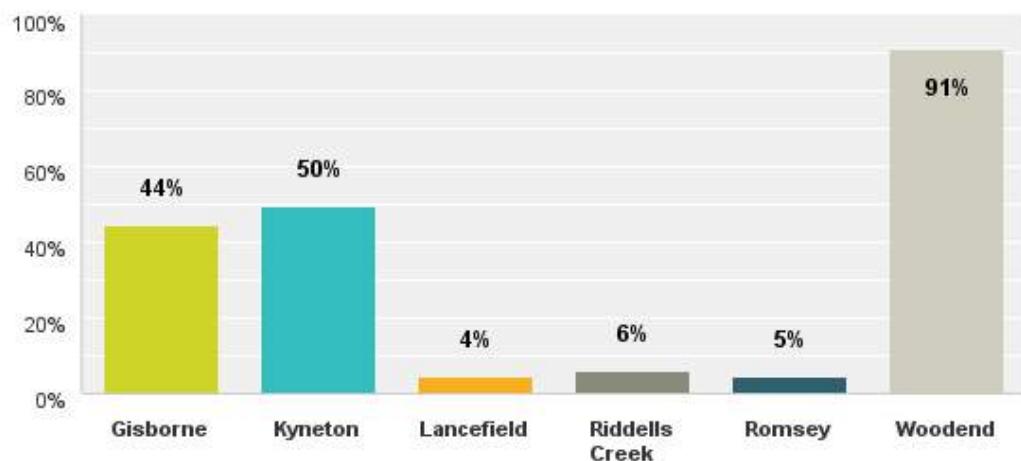
"Tourism is not important to me. The local community matters more."



10 questions were included in the survey, with the responses being included in the following pages.

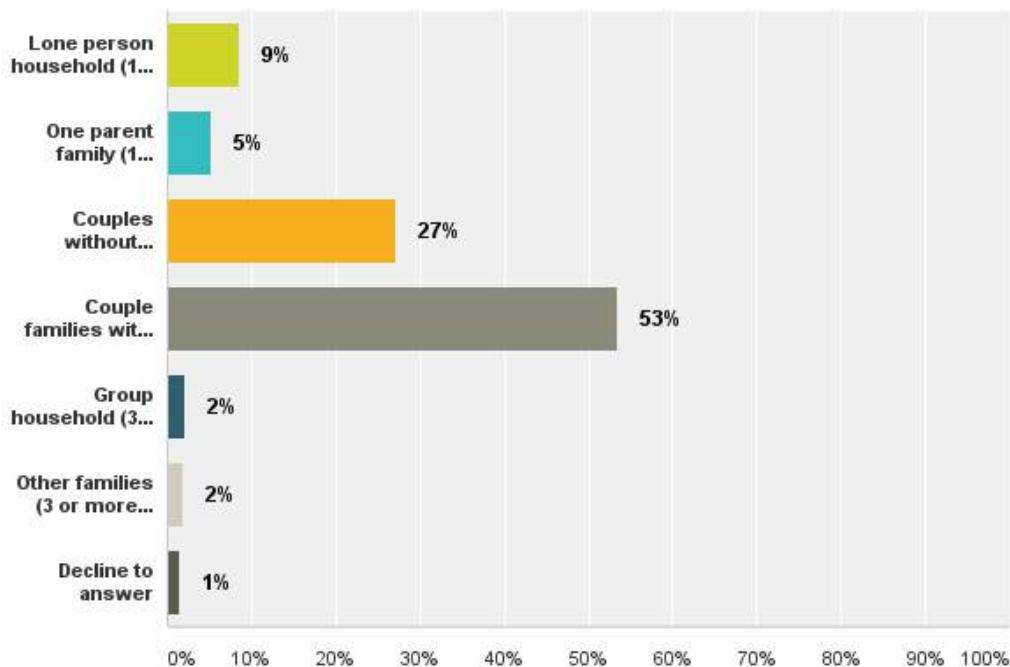
Q1 Which are the towns in the Macedon Ranges that you visit to use Council facilities? (please tick all that apply)

Answered: 415 Skipped: 11



Q2 What type of household do you live in?

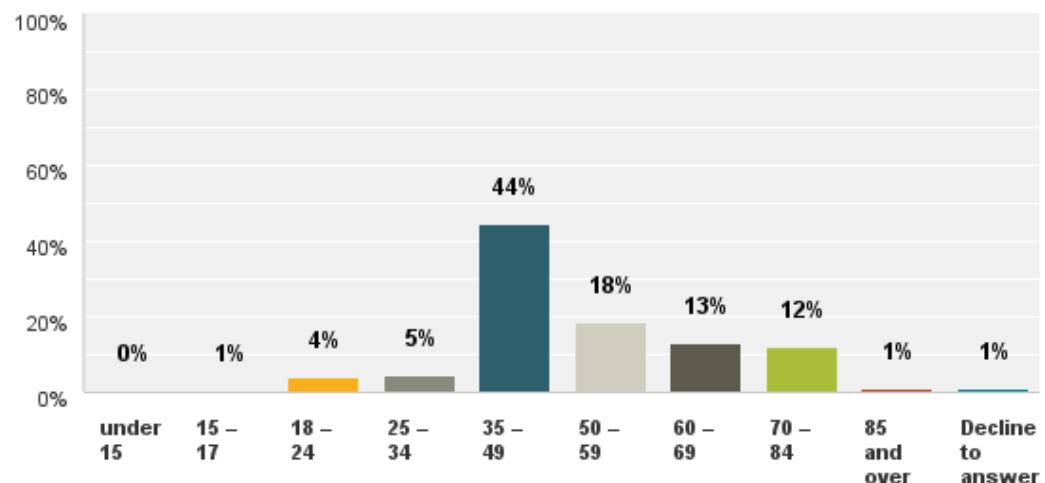
Answered: 416 Skipped: 10





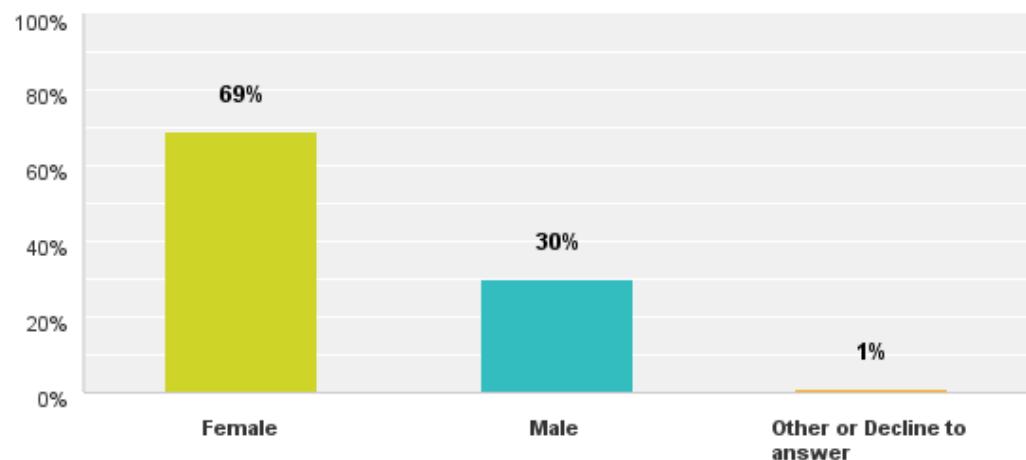
Q3 What is your age?

Answered: 422 Skipped: 4



Q4 What is your gender?

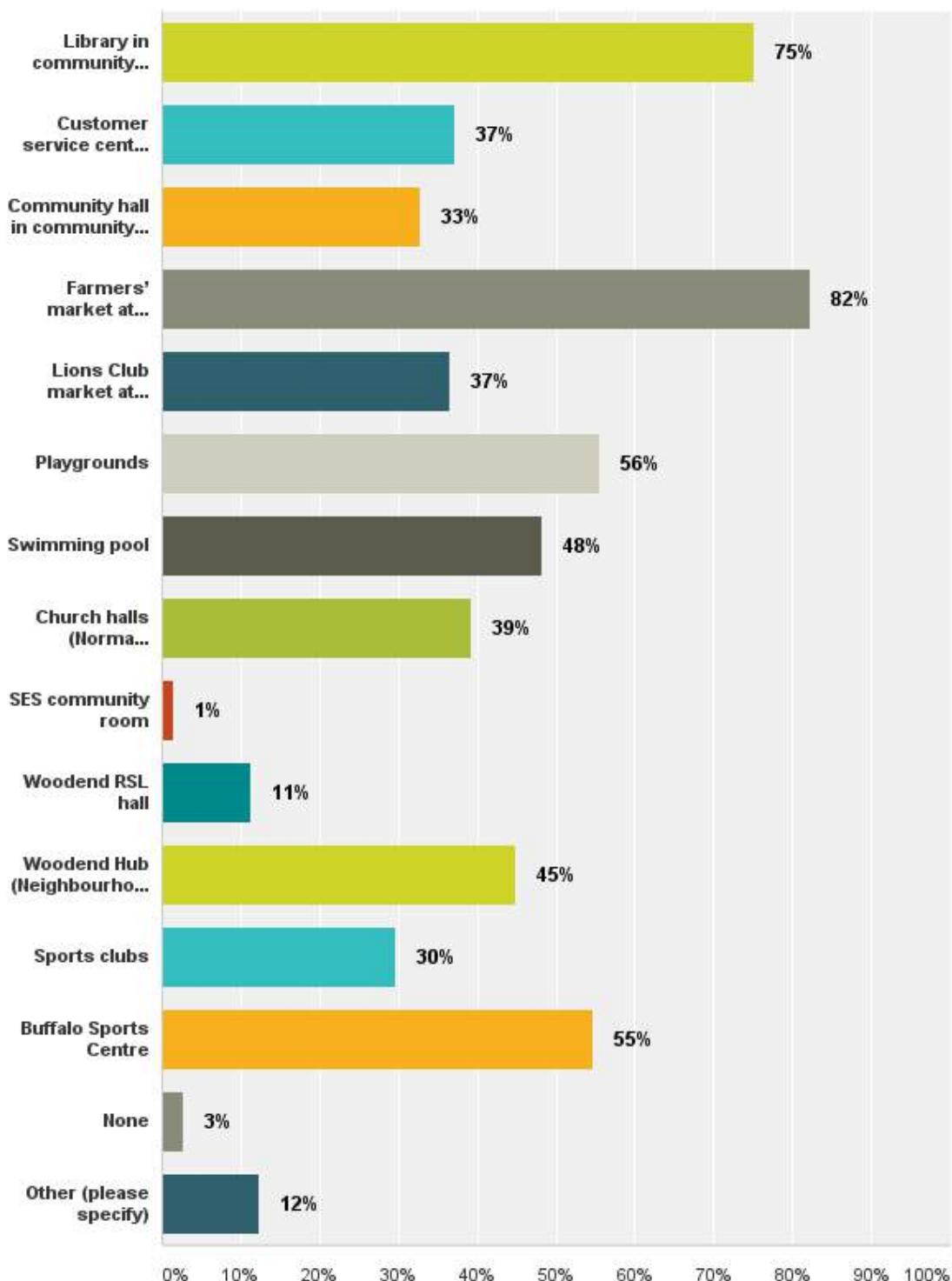
Answered: 422 Skipped: 4





Q5 Which of the following Woodend community facilities or venues do you use? (please tick all that apply)

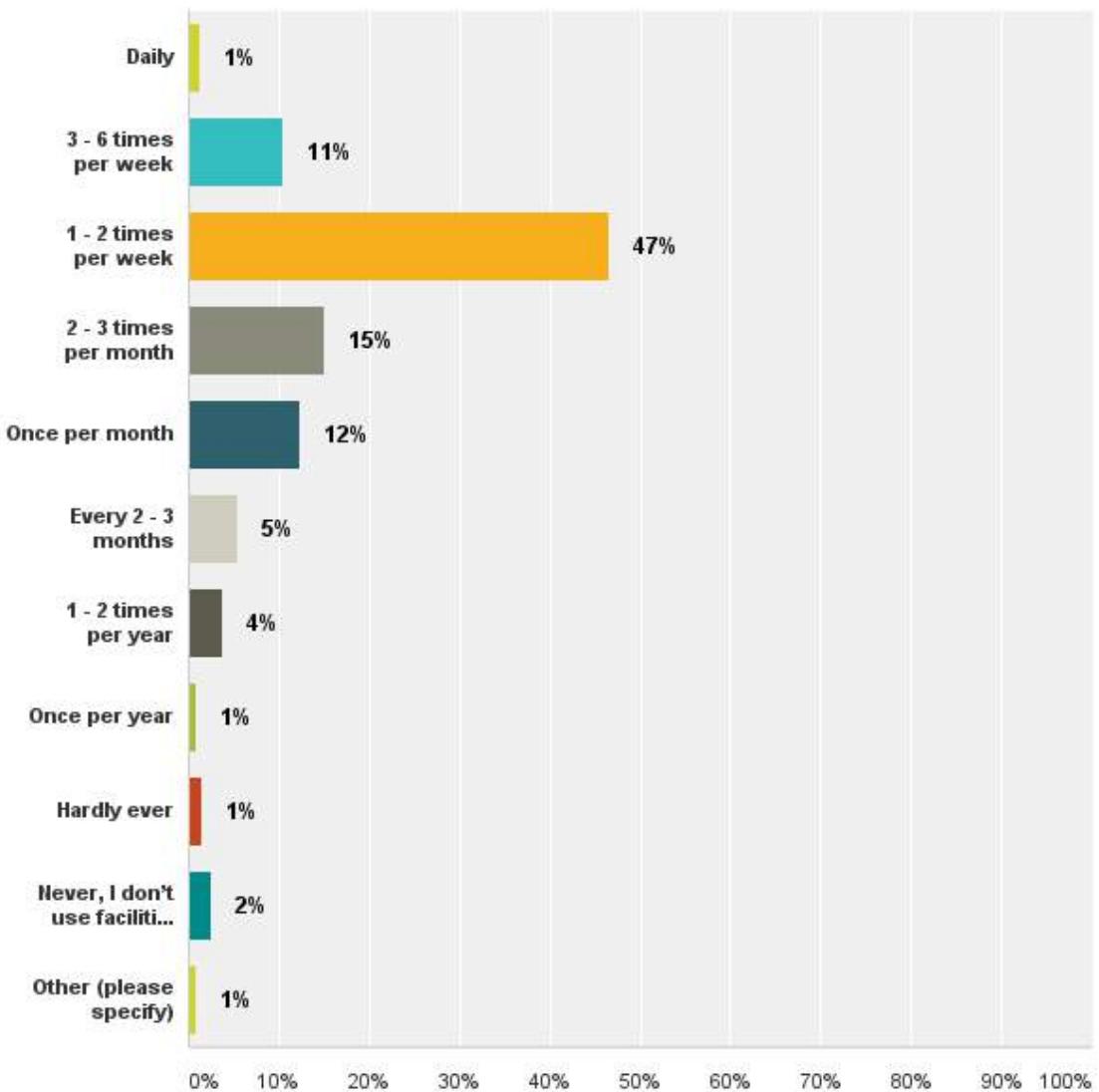
Answered: 407 Skipped: 19





Q6 Thinking of the community facility that you use the most frequently in Woodend, how often would you use this facility?

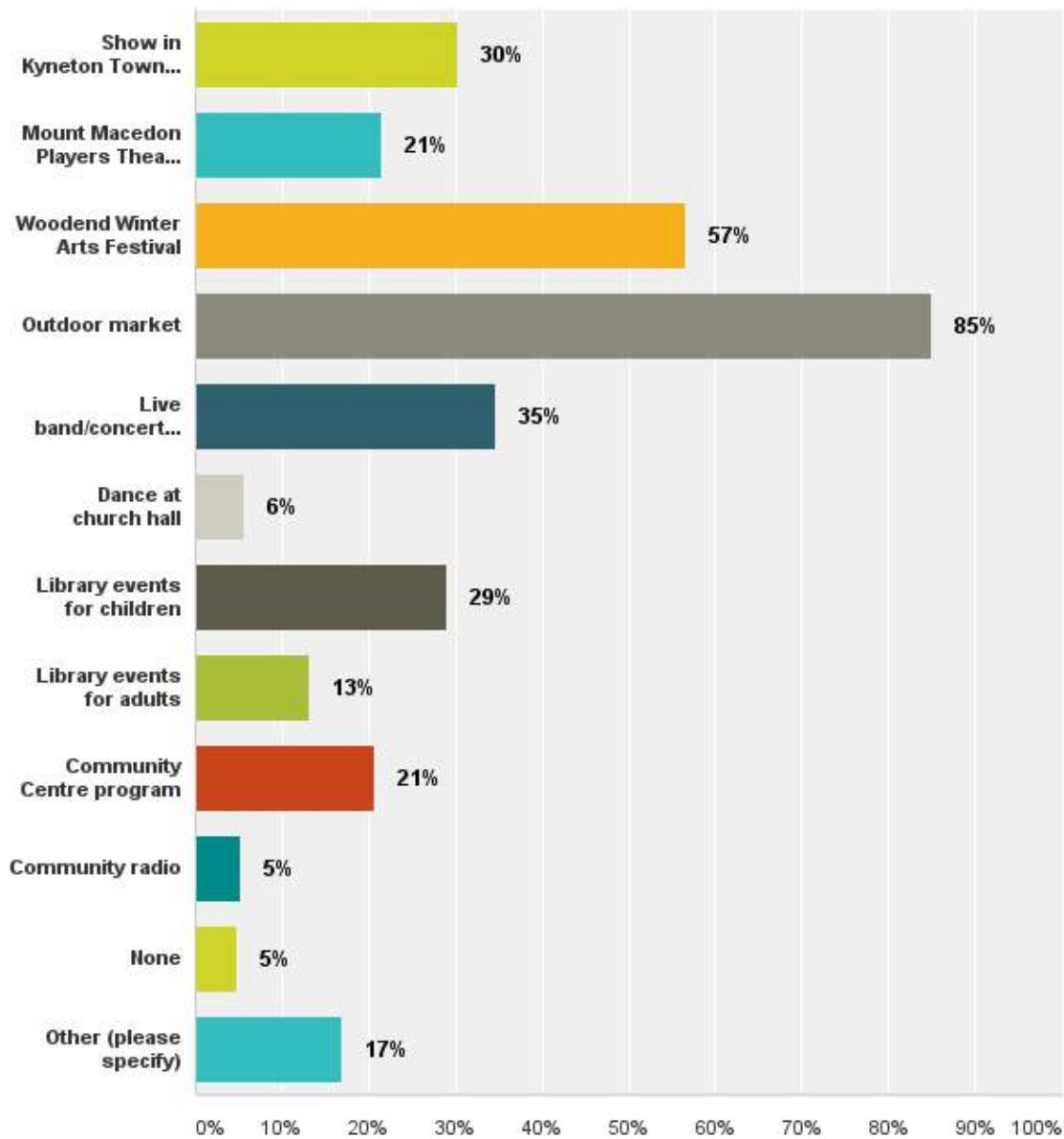
Answered: 408 Skipped: 18





Q7 During the past year, what are the events held in the Macedon Ranges that you have participated in? This could be in Woodend or another location in the Macedon Ranges. (please tick all that apply)

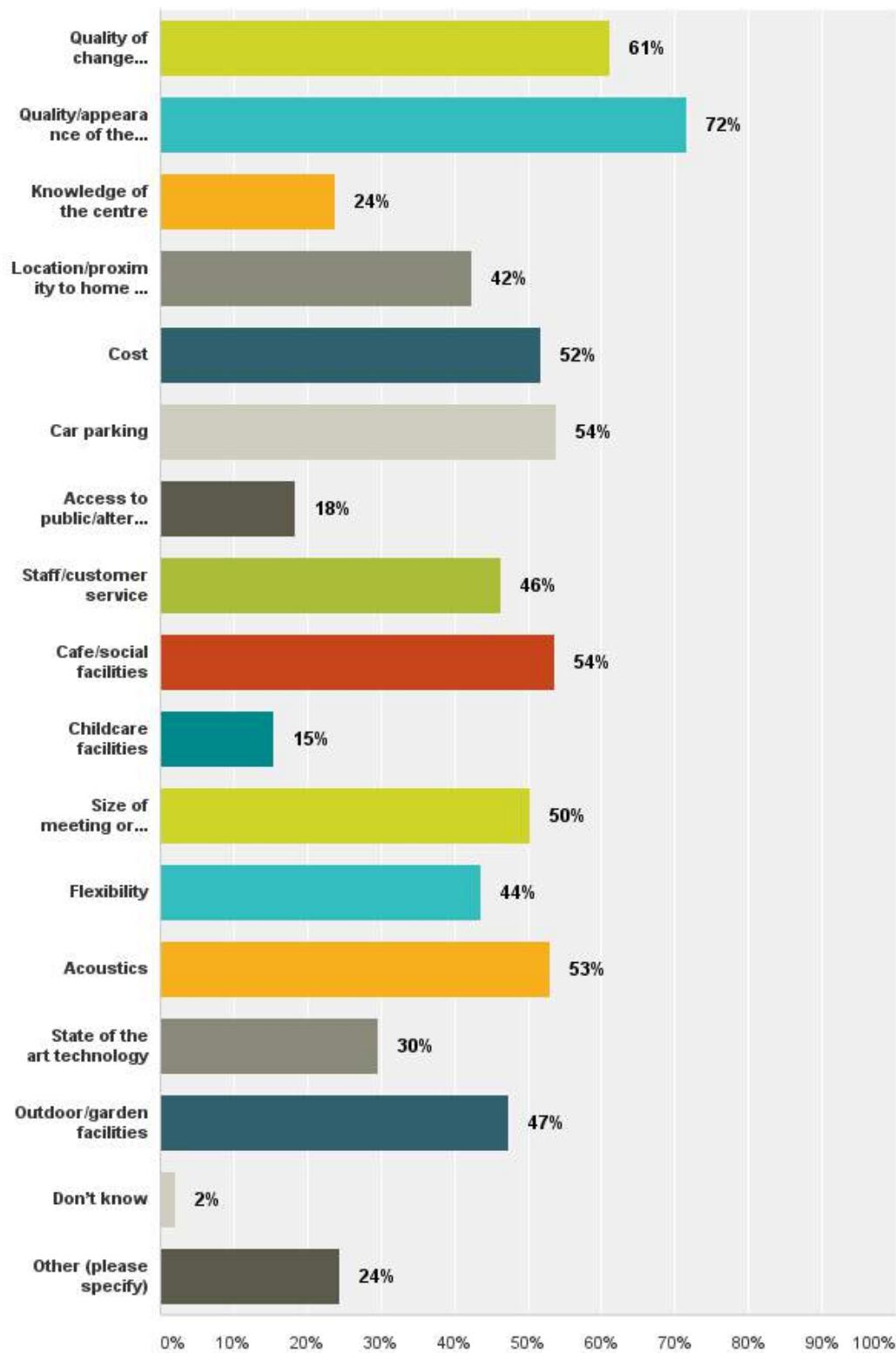
Answered: 401 Skipped: 25





Q8 What factors are important to you in a community meeting or performance space? (please tick all that apply)

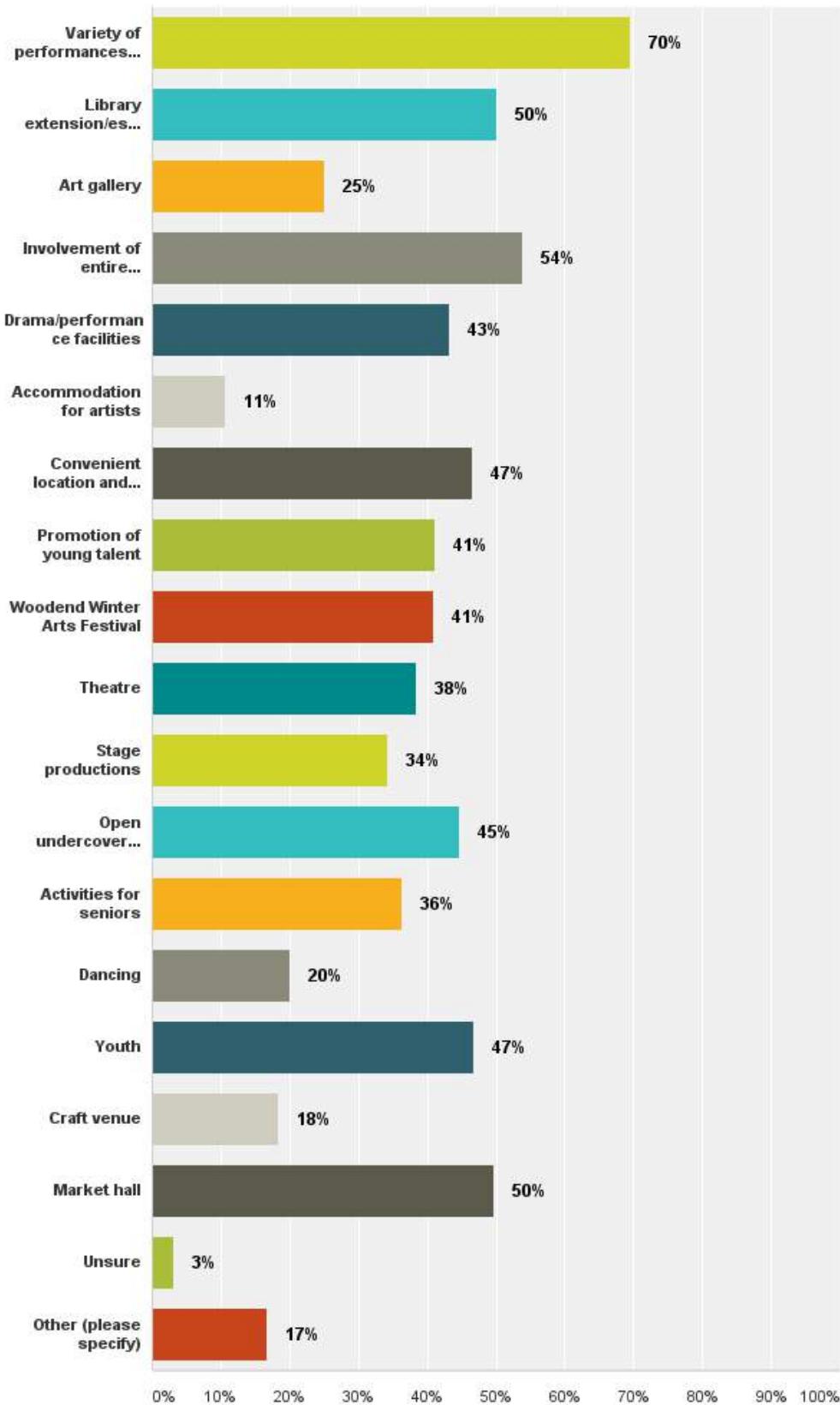
Answered: 394 Skipped: 32





Q9 What should be Council's priorities for a community precinct over the next 5 - 10 years? (please tick all that apply)

Answered: 391 Skipped: 35





Question 10 – What does the community centre precinct mean to you and what would your ideal centre include?

Question provided respondents with the ability to provide specific comments in relation to the above questions. 285 people answered this question. 146 did not answer this question.

A summary of the key themes included in the responses is summarised in the word cloud below.





Question 11 - What do you think Woodend needs to do to create more tourist friendly spaces? Is tourism important to you and why? Any additional comments you would like to make?

Question provided respondees with the ability to provide specific comments in relation to the above questions. 255 people answered this question. 171 did not answer this question.

A summary of the key themes included in the responses is summarised in the word cloud below.

